



COMPETENCE IN PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION DESIGN & SPECIFICATION ACTIVITIES

Pathways for technical specialists

Industry Competence Steering Group Sector Led Group 12

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1 Scope

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this work is to create a single industry standard for developing, measuring, and validating the competence of those undertaking design & specification of passive fire protection as defined in 1.2. This will ensure that defined arrangements are in place by which competence can be objectively measured and confirmed, increasing fire safety.

This document and its underpinning details are designed for use for a variety of purposes, including:

- Development of industry wide tools for measuring and validating competence
- Development of organisational approaches to evidencing workforce competence
- Alignment and/or recognition of existing training, assessment, qualifications
- Development of new training, assessment, qualifications, and occupational standards
- Strengthening arrangements for organisational capability

This standard should be read in combination with the Competence in Passive Fire Protection Design & Specification Activities – Benchmarking document, which describes the work of the passive fire protection design & specification competence group (the design & specification group), the requirements for competence in this area, and the associated functional map and framework of competencies.

1.2 Occupational area

Detailed design and specification activity specific to passive fire protection takes place at RIBA stages 3 (spatial coordination) and 4 (technical design). For the purposes of this work, the definition of design under the Construction (Design and Management) [CDM] Regulations is being employed.

Good design and specification of passive fire products and/or systems is critical to ensure the safety of buildings and their occupants. This includes:

- Fire protection to the structural frame
- Fire resistant walls, floors & ceilings
- Penetration seals
- Linear gap seals
- Large cavity barriers
- Cavity barriers for use in facades
- Fire resisting ducts and dampers
- Operable fire curtains
- Fire resisting doors and associated hardware
- Fire resistant glazing

Much detailed design and specification of passive fire protection is undertaken by technical specialists within manufacturers or contractors. In addition, increasing emphasis on ensuring appropriate passive fire design and specification within industry (driven by acknowledgement of likely design liability) has resulted in the emergence / concept of a specific 'Passive Fire Designer' role. The routes to competence set out in this document therefore apply to:

- Passive Fire Designer (new specialist role)

- Technical Specialist (within manufacturer or contractor)

1.3 Limitations and exclusions

This information is specific to competence for passive fire design and specification. As such, concept design is considered out of scope of this work.

A smaller amount of work in this area may be undertaken by Fire Engineers or Architects who specialise in passive fire protection. Further research in this area is underway and routes for Fire Engineers or Architects who specialise or who wish to specialise in design and specification of passive fire protection will be produced separately.

Competence required for making assessments and engineering judgements is specifically excluded, as individuals working in the role types set out in section 1.2 and not expected to conduct these activities.

1.4 Building types

The routes set out here are independent of building type and are applicable to both HRB and non-HRB environments.

1.5 Geographical scope

This proposals in this report have designed to apply to the whole of the UK.

2 The standard for competence

2.1 Competencies

Detailed competencies for design & specification are set out in the 'design & specify' domain of the passive fire protection functional map and framework of competencies available from <https://asfpindex.org.uk/competenceframework>. The activities relevant to this standard are listed below.

Individuals (in conjunction with their employer where appropriate) should select relevant activities from the functional map according to the scope of their specific role. Evidence should then be gathered to show that the full scope of SKEB statements for relevant activities have been met in accordance with the routes to competence set out in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.¹

Specification:

- Specify fire protection to the structural frame, to meet a design
- Specify passive fire products for fire resistant walls, floors, and ceilings, to meet a design
- Specify passive fire products for penetration seals, to meet a design
- Specify passive fire products for linear gap seals, to meet a design
- Specify large cavity barriers, to meet a design
- Specify cavity barriers for use in facades, to meet a design
- Specify fire resisting ducts and dampers to meet a design
- Specify operable fire curtains, to meet a design
- Specify fire resisting doors and associated hardware, to meet a design
- Specify fire resisting glazing to meet a design

Design:

- Develop designs for fire protection to the structural frame to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for fire resistant floors, walls, and ceilings to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for penetration seals to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for linear gap seals to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for large cavity barriers to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for cavity barriers in facades to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for fire resisting ducts and dampers to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for operable fire curtains to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks
- Develop designs for fire resisting doors and associated hardware, to meet a design
- Develop designs for fire resisting glazing to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks

¹ Where additional routes to competence are identified over time, the standard will be updated to reflect the full range of options available

- Coordinate technical design information for passive fire protection to meet a fire strategy and regulatory frameworks

2.2 Preparing to evidence competence

Individuals may use a combination of formal and informal learning to prepare to demonstrate competence.

Training alone (without embedded summative assessment) does not provide evidence of competence, but it is a useful enabler to prepare individuals to create the evidence of skills and knowledge required. Training may be carried out in house or through third-party training providers. When purchasing training, individuals and employers should check that this meets the requirements of the framework and will have value to them.

In addition to aiding development of knowledge and skills, informal learning in the workplace will also help to develop experience and behaviour.

2.3 Collecting evidence of competence

2.3.1 *Route to competence: evidencing initial baseline competence*

Individuals must provide:

- Knowledge assessment certificate, specifying completion of assessment in relevant activities that meets industry requirements
- Qualification certificate (qualification title TBD), specifying completion of assessment in relevant activities that meets industry requirements
- Evidence of experience, e.g. through records of work completed aligned to the framework
- Evidence of behaviour, e.g. through records of performance management or appraisal aligned to the framework

2.3.2 *Route to competence: addition of further competencies*

Individuals may need to evidence competence in further activities, if they expand their scope of work, change employer etc. Individuals should complete further assessment to add to their range of evidence over time, as and when these are required. Individuals would still be required to provide the evidence set out in 2.3.1, but this should cover the full range of activities in which they now need to validate their competence.

2.4 Initial validation of competence

Individuals and their employers should validate that evidence of competence is in place across the full scope of relevant benchmarks, as set out in the framework and in accordance with the route to competence set out in 2.3.

It is recommended that a third-party system is utilised to provide an objective check. For example, this may be through a specific third-party certification scheme embedding the requirements for competence, a certified quality management system incorporating individual competence checks, a trade association membership scheme or a third-party registration mechanism.

Individuals who have yet to meet the required standard of competence for a particular activity should have their work overseen and checked by a competent individual until competence has been demonstrated.

2.5 Revalidation of competence

Competence should be revalidated every 3 years, as a minimum, according to the requirements set out in the framework of competencies. This includes:

- Ongoing demonstration of experience through continuing collation of workplace evidence
- Ongoing demonstration of behaviour through continuing evidence from performance management systems etc.
- Evidence of additional knowledge and / or skills requirements resulting from future changes to the competence definitions
- Evidence of continuing professional development (CPD) which contributes to improving performance, compliance, safety, innovation or leadership relevant to the industry (this should not include mandatory safety or organisational training e.g. manual handling)

Alongside ongoing collation of evidence to demonstrate baseline competence, individuals should also complete any relevant manufacturers' training for the products / systems they deal with.

2.6 Ability to check competence of individuals validated against the framework

The design of passive fire protection must be embedded within broader built environment design and should be a component of a design process which addresses the design of buildings as systems. Those in the roles described in section 1.2 are specialists likely operating as part of a design team which is planned, managed and monitored by the Building Regulations Principal Designer (BRPD). It is important that the validated competence of individuals is made available to members of the design team, particularly the BRPD who has overall accountability for the design, as well as relevant clients, regulatory and accreditation bodies.

As these individuals are likely to operate as part of a team and do not interact directly with the public or building occupiers, there is no requirement for a publicly accessible register of people in these roles. Care should also be given to the data protection implications of sharing such personal data.

2.7 Relationship to organisational capability

Alongside demonstrating the capability of individuals within their workforce, companies also need to demonstrate organisational capability. This can be evidenced through implementation of an internal system for managing the competence of staff, for example an ISO 9001 system that integrates competence management, or a third-party certification scheme that embeds individual competence.

Evidence generated through organisational capability schemes may prove useful for evidencing individual competence, for example through collating records of experience and behaviour against the framework.

2.8 Ongoing monitoring and maintenance

These pathways will be managed and maintained by ASFP in consultation with SLG 12 and with practical support from the passive fire design & specification competence group.

2 Implementing the standard

Further development work will be required to put in place the proposed routes to competence for the sector. The following table sets out the next steps required to fully implement the competence standard.

It should be noted that this list is not necessarily exhaustive, and further actions might be identified as work progresses.

Where specific product development is required, estimated time required for that development to take place has been factored into the timescale outlined.

Activity required	Purpose	Owner	Target completion timescale
Determine knowledge assessment and qualification requirements	To create a clear picture of the requirements	D&S group	Q3 2025
Determine knowledge assessment delivery model	To ensure that one deliverable assessment method can be put in place	ASFP	Q3 2025
Identify potential delivery partner(s) for qualification, and determine delivery model	To determine how a qualification can be developed and delivered and with which awarding organisation (AO)	ASFP	Q3 2025
Develop knowledge assessment	To deliver required route to competence	ASFP & industry specialists	Q4 2025
Develop qualification	To deliver required route to competence	ASFP & industry specialists	Q3 2026
Develop aligned training	To support individuals in preparing for assessment	ASFP & industry specialists	TBC
Quality assure existing, relevant training	To ensure high quality training is available, and that its alignment to the framework is clear	ASFP	Ongoing
Create supporting guidance for capturing evidence of experience & behaviour	To support individuals and employers in gathering evidence of competence	ASFP	TBC
Determine and implement registration requirements	To ensure that the registration mechanism is set up for design & specification to support industry	ASFP	TBC
Launch and communicate routes to competence	To generate awareness and drive uptake	ASFP & SLG 12	TBC

Appendix 1 - Terms & definitions

Behaviour

Observable traits or ways of working that should be displayed. Observable things that an individual does or does not do

Competence / individual competence

Application of skill, knowledge, experience, and behaviour consistently by an individual to achieve a specific outcome

Standard for competence

Procedures & requirements for developing, measuring, validating, and proving competence against agreed skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviours required for an individual undertaking a role, function, activity, or task in order to perform their work to predetermined standards and expectations and maintain or improve their performance over time. This is sometimes referred to as a competence framework or competence standard

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Activities undertaken by an individual to maintain and develop competence, including formal and informal learning, self-assessment, obtaining feedback and identifying areas for improvement

Experience

Participation in relevant activities or observation of facts and events leading to acquisition, improvement or demonstration of skills and knowledge

Formal learning

Organised and structured learning against formal learning objectives

Framework of competencies

Agreed statements of skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviour against specific activities identified in the functional map

Functional map

A map of activities included in the sub-sector, split into pre-determined levels of complexity

Individual

A single human being

Informal learning

Self-directed learning, or learning from experience

Higher-risk building (HRB)

Building subject to enhanced regulatory requirements or where risks might be considered elevated (for example as a result of the physical characteristics of the building, the way in which the building is used, or as a result of human factors)

Job role

The specific combination of activities performed in a specific role, as agreed between an employee and an employer. This may change over time, or from employer to employer, or between employees of the same employer

Knowledge

Assimilation of facts, theories, and practices in relation to a given role, function, activity, or task

Occupation

The area of work undertaken by a category of employees, each of which may have a related but different job role. This is standard across the entire industry

Organisational capability

The combination of people, practices and other resources brought together by a business to allow it to function effectively and deliver value to customers and stakeholders

Qualification

A regulated programme of assessment, sometimes with aligned training, which results

in the issue of a nationally recognised award being made upon completion

Revalidation

The formal process of reassessing an individual's competence against a sector-specific framework on a periodic basis to check that competence has been maintained

Sector-specific competence framework

A competence framework relevant to a specific role, function, activity, task, trade, or discipline

Skill

The ability to perform an activity or task consistently with a specific intended outcome

Validation

The formal process of assessing an individual's competence against a sector-specific framework